

The Journal of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, Inc.

AAZK

Animal Keepers' Forum



April 2022, Volume 49, No. 4

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**SPECIAL ISSUE
FOCUSED ON
DIVERSITY,
EQUITY, ACCESS,
AND INCLUSION**

Photo by Hilary Colton

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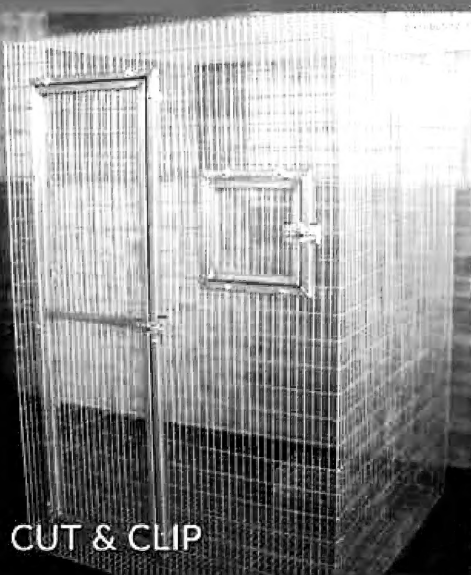
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ABOUT THE COVER

This month's cover photo comes to us from Hilary Colton of the National Zoological Park and features the Giant Ocean tank of the New England Aquarium, which features coral and other marine animals from the Caribbean. Reefs serve as habitats for many species of fish and invertebrates and are home to the highest biodiversity on earth for any ecosystem. Aquariums serve as an opportunity to introduce coral to visitors and educate them on the threats to reef longevity.

Coral worldwide are subject to threats from climate change, relating to rising ocean temperatures and continued environmental pollution. Zoos and aquariums are working together with AZA SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction, focusing on Atlantic Acropora staghorn and elkhorn species.

If you want to learn more about these efforts, visit <https://www.aza.org/connect-stories/stories/endangered-species-profile-coral-and-coral-reefs>

Articles sent to *Animal Keepers' Forum* will be reviewed by the editorial staff for publication. Articles of a research or technical nature will be submitted to one or more of the zoo professionals who serve as referees for AKF. No commitment is made to the author, but an effort will be made to publish articles as soon as possible. Lengthy articles may be separated into monthly installments at the discretion of the Editor. The Editor reserves the right to edit material without consultation unless approval is requested in writing by the author. Materials submitted will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed, appropriately-sized envelope. Telephone, fax or e-mail contributions of late-breaking news or last-minute insertions are accepted as space allows. Phone (330) 483-1104; FAX (330) 483-1444; e-mail is shane.good@aazk.org. If you have questions about submission guidelines, please contact the Editor. Submission guidelines are also found at: aazk.org/akf-submission-guidelines/.

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I hope that all AAZK members can learn from the stories, resources, and data presented in this issue of the Animal Keepers' Forum.

In June of 2020, AAZK released the following Statement on Racial Equality:

"As animal keepers, we are granted the ability to engage with millions of Americans each year on topics such as environmental conservation, the preservation of natural resources, and animal biodiversity. Minorities and their communities across the globe continue to lawfully assemble and demonstrate in opposition to systemic racial inequalities and violence, and we stand by them. We recognize that people of color are underrepresented in our profession and we must work on acknowledging, listening to, and learning about community concerns at this time. Diversity in the Association and the field is integral to a successful workforce, and we recognize the work that needs to be done to serve all in our membership. Today's keepers are tomorrow's hiring managers and AAZK hopes that our membership boosts the inclusion of minority interest, understanding, and presence in the animal care profession."

In following through with our words, AAZK created the President's Task Force on Diversity in September of 2021 and the members of that task force drafted AAZK's Statement on Inclusivity in January of 2021. Below is an excerpt from that statement:

"The American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) is committed to ensuring that no one is excluded from the field of animal keeping, and that all members are treated equitably. The Association does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion (creed), gender/gender expression, age, nationality, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, maternity/paternity or military status; in any of its activities or Chapters. These activities include but are not limited to, hiring and firing of paid staff, selection of Board members, voting, and vendor acquisitions. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our delegation and partners."

The AAZK Diversity Committee was ratified by the Board at the 2021 Annual Meeting as the organization embraced the Committee's mission to "increase opportunities to diversify the animal care profession by encouraging the recruitment, development, mentoring, and retention of animal keepers from all backgrounds." The members of the Diversity Task Force and now Diversity Committee have done amazing work in less than two years of existence. I am proud to learn from them and I hope that all AAZK members can learn from the stories, resources, and data presented in this issue of the *Animal Keepers' Forum*.

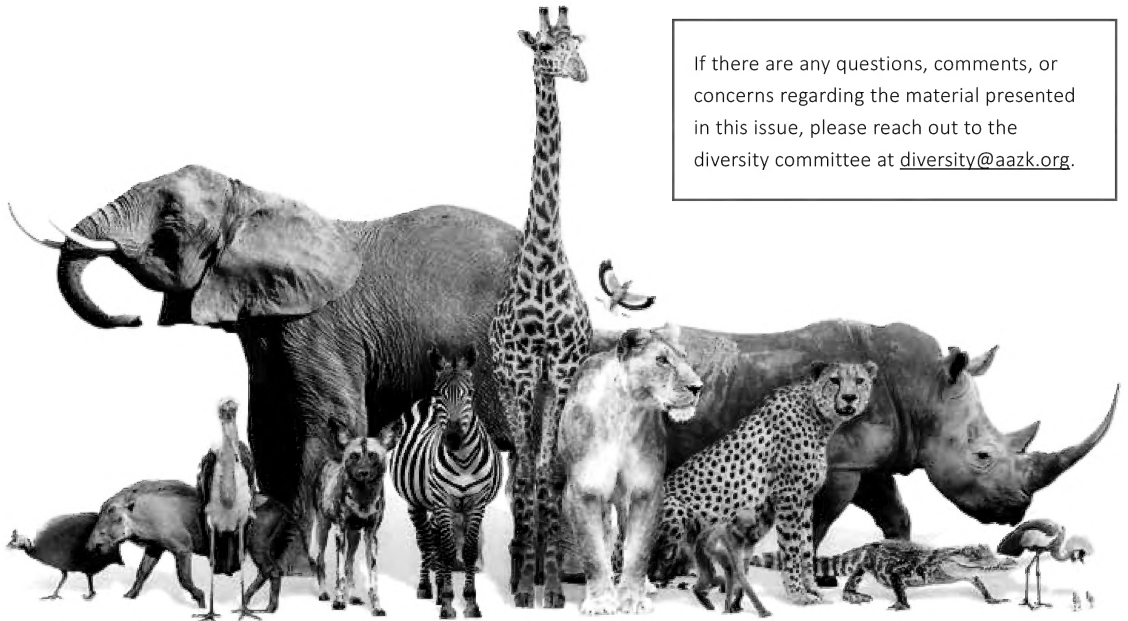
Thank you,

Paul.Brandenburger@AAZK.org



The AAZK Diversity Committee serves as a resource regarding diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEAI) efforts in AAZK and the animal care field as a whole. The Committee's mission is to increase opportunities to extend the animal care profession by encouraging the recruitment, development, mentoring, and retention of animal keepers from all backgrounds. Our primary goals are increasing the presence of underrepresented groups in the zoo and aquarium field, emphasizing animal care professionals, and promoting full inclusion in all facets of their careers. The Committee assists AAZK in improving diversity statements and encourages communication on topics related to DEAI with the membership.

We recognize that the content of the articles in this issue of *Animal Keepers' Forum* cannot encompass diversity in its entirety. This term also includes ethnicity, gender, race, religion, age, sexuality, education, and many other factors to consider when creating a heterogeneous workplace. The Committee is committed to encouraging and developing an inclusive community representing people from all groups and backgrounds by promoting topics that highlight diversity of all kinds and increasing equity of experiences for all volunteers, interns, and staff. The information presented within this edition of *Animal Keeper's Forum* is only a fraction of what we hope to accomplish, and future efforts may be a continuation of these assessments and highlights.



If there are any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the material presented in this issue, please reach out to the diversity committee at diversity@azk.org.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Travis Steffens

Executive Director of Planet Madagascar, and Assistant Professor at the University of Guelph

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2021 Zoological Demographics Survey

Kathryn Clemens, PhD Student, Antioch University New England

Hilary Colton, Animal Keeper, Smithsonian's National Zoological Park, Washington, DC

Sarah Snider, Sea Lion/Carnivore Keeper, Tulsa Zoo, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Maya Stay, Wild Animal Keeper, WCS Queens Zoo, New York, New York

In 2021, the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) Diversity Committee created a survey that inquired about demographics within the animal care field. Respondents were not limited to the organization's membership, and distribution was encouraged facility-wide for anyone who wished to participate. In total, 480 individuals participated and agreed for their information to be used to disseminate the data collected. Questions pertained to current job title, age, ethnicity, gender, education level, unpaid experiences, salary, and career length in a full-time capacity. It should be noted that all answers are self-reported, and the Diversity Committee made no efforts to verify the information presented by participants.

Looking at the survey respondents, 77.3% were members of AAZK in some capacity, either at National or local Chapter levels (Table 1). Of the total participants, 327 were National members, and 152 were not National members. Of the current

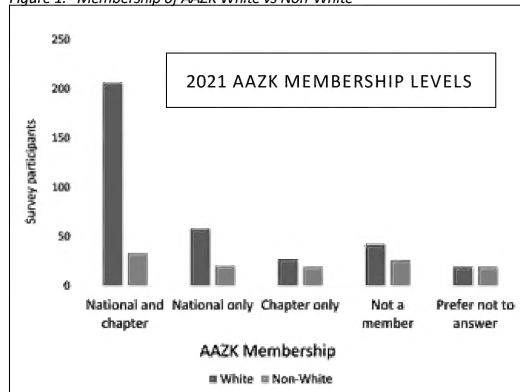
1826 National roster, 18% of the membership participated in this survey. The majority of participants were Professional Level members (59.6%); however, some Affiliate, Student, Chapter-only, and Non-members also responded to the survey (Figure 1). Those who chose to write in their responses in the Other category included individuals clarifying that they had previously been AAZK members or their facility was an Institutional Member.

The representation of non-white participants within AAZK was not unexpected due to the lack of representation within the zoological field, with survey trends in membership reflecting trends of white participants. That being said, the Diversity Committee and AAZK recognize that barriers may contribute to who can be a National AAZK member. AAZK is committed to breaking down these barriers and is currently working to make membership more accessible to everyone. Current efforts

Table 1. AAZK membership distribution among survey respondents

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL	COUNT	PERCENT
Professional	274	59.57%
Affiliate	43	9.35%
Student	10	2.17%
Chapter member only	13	2.83%
Not a national member	88	19.13%
Prefer not to answer	20	4.35%
Other	12	2.61%

Figure 1. Membership of AAZK White vs Non-White



WORK SCHEDULE	PERCENT (%)
Full-time	82.88
Part-time	3.76
Seasonal	2.51
Volunteer	5.22
Intern	0.42
Retired	2.3
Prefer not to answer	0.63
Other	2.3

Table 2. Responses indicating work schedule at a zoo or aquarium facility.

include the International Outreach Committee's continued work in bilingual resources and sponsorship, and the Grants Committee's continuing efforts to sponsor professional development and conservation research. Tiered membership pricing is available for those not working full time in a professional capacity.

When considering membership of AAZK as reported within this survey, we can see that in all categories White members outnumbered Non-White with the exception of "Prefer not to answer." This may be attributed to a lack of representation amongst those who participated in this demographic survey or an indication of the field as a whole.

CURRENT POSITION & DEPARTMENT

The information gathered shared that 82.88% of survey participants are working in a full-time capacity at a zoo or aquarium facility (Table 2). 6.24% of respondents are working paid but not full-time, with 5.64% serving as either volunteers or interns. Write-in responses for "Other" included representatives that are full-time under a temporary contract, laid off, and seeking employment.

When asked about the amount of time that survey participants have been in a paid, full-time position, 6.77% stated they are still seeking full-time employment, while 2.96% declined to answer the question. Most of the survey participants (27.06%) stated that they have been in a full-time paid position for 0-5 years. Following this timeframe, there was a steady decline in the number of participants who had been in a paid, full-time position for more extended periods. Participants who have been full-time between 6-10 years made up 21.35% of the respondents, while 14.38% of participants have been in the field for 11-15 years. Percentages dropped into the single digits for those working full-time between 16-20 years (9.51%), 21-25 years (7.61%), 26-30 years (4.44%), 31-35 years (2.96%), and 36-40 years (1.90%). Less than 1% of survey respondents indicated careers of 41-50 years, and no participants had been

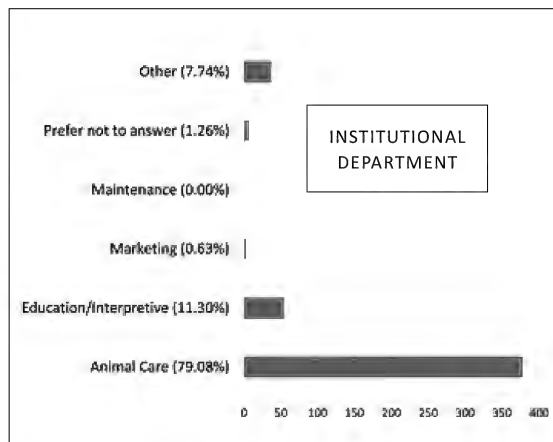


Figure 2. Range of institutional departments represented in survey respondents

in a full-time position for 51+ years. Results may indicate that career length in zoo and aquarium facilities begins to taper off after 15 years, but this could also be attributed to the age demographics of respondents for this survey.

Overall, 79.08% of respondents identified themselves as working in Animal Care (Figure 2). There was also good representation from individuals working in an Educational or Interpretive capacity (11.30%). Given that different facilities may classify job titles into other departments, interpretation of these data may be complicated. This question had many write-in answers, including but not limited to: Registrars, Veterinary professionals, Guest Service employees, Retired individuals, and those currently seeking employment.

ETHNICITY

Previous investigations into demographic information of AAZK membership have found that in 1998, 98% of those who responded to a membership survey identified as White/Caucasian (Figure 3). Survey results in 2017 saw an increase in the ethnic diversity of only 2.9% amongst respondents, though participants had the option to select multiple choices pertaining to how they self-identify (Figure 4). A concerted effort was made for this 2021 version to gather information from a larger pool of individuals than merely AAZK membership rosters (Figure 5). Comparisons between these historical data and those results presented in this article should be read with the understanding that survey methods and questions were different at each data-gathering stage.

The AAZK Diversity Committee hopes to distribute a similar survey every five years for the use of demographic trend assessment and anticipation of greater institutional involvement. Questions will be adjusted to gain more specific insights for increased value to the zoological field.

The majority of those participating in this survey were White or Caucasian (Figure 5). Increases in Non-White representation

1992 AAZK MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

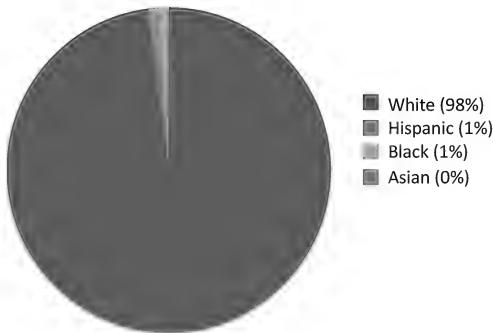


Figure 3. 1992 AAZK membership demographics

2017 AAZK MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

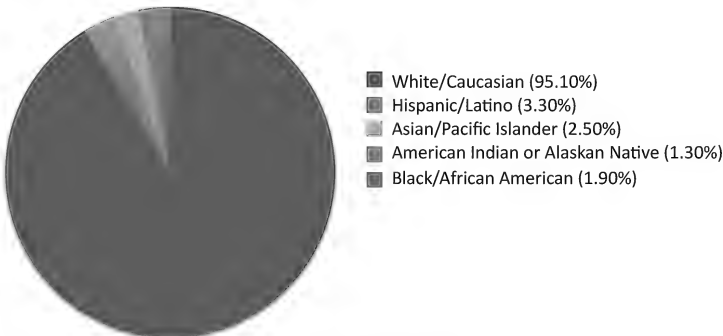


Figure 4. 2017 AAZK membership demographics. Members could select more than one choice for ethnic identity (n=641)

2021 DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

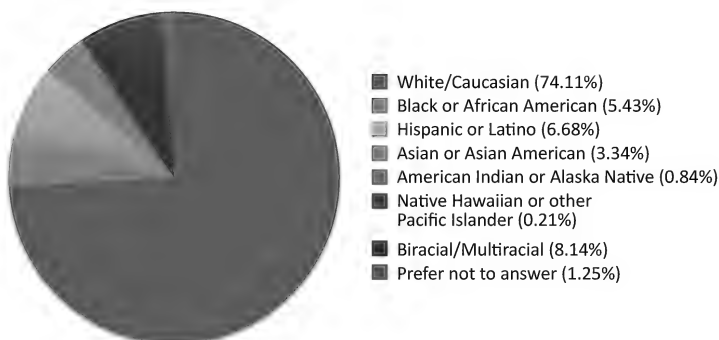


Figure 5. 2021 responses to the demographic survey. Participants were not only current members of AAZK and could select more than one option (n=479)

were seen from the 2017 results, particularly among Black/African American (8.1%) and Hispanic/Latino (6.68%) groups. We did not ask participants identifying as Biracial or Multiracial to note their specific background, and some individuals may identify with more than one non-white classification.

GENDER

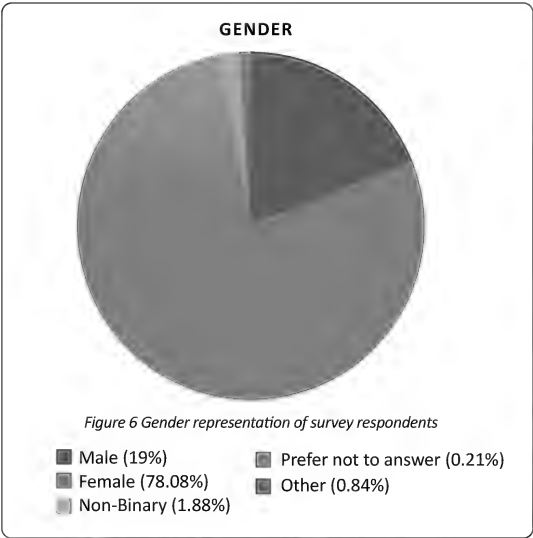
The majority (78.1%) of survey participants identified as female, with male (19.0%) and non-binary (1.9%) completing the formal selection options (Figure 6). 0.84% listed additional gender representations, writing in non-binary femme, male/non-binary, non-binary/trans, and questioning gender. AAZK and the Diversity Committee recognize that gender is not a monolith, and many different identities may not have been represented in these results. We will continually endeavor to represent different identities with honor and respect, and future survey choices regarding this topic will change as need be.

AGE

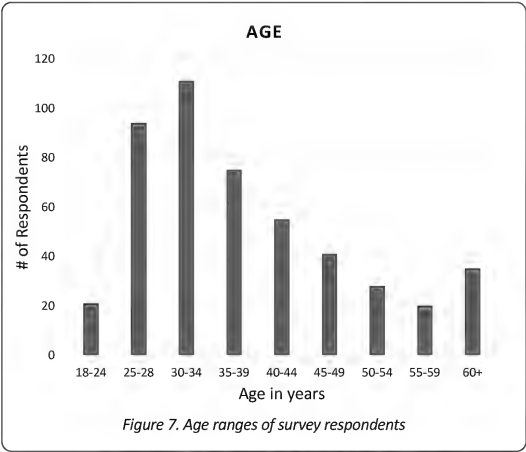
From the responses collected, there was a wide range of reported ages and representations in each category (Figure 7). The majority of respondents were between 30-34 years of age (23.13%), with the lowest group age bracket being 55-59 (4.17%). No respondents declined to answer this question.

EDUCATION

The majority of participants indicated a Bachelor's degree for this question, with the next most common being a Postgraduate (Figure 8). 12.94% of participants said they did not have an undergraduate degree at the time of participating in the survey. This trend impacts the applicant pool to those who can pursue secondary education, leaving out those who may not have the financial means or support network to afford a four-year program. Future inquiries into this topic may also be amended to specify the highest completed education to eliminate skewed data from those who did not finish a degree or are currently pursuing one.



When examining respondents' data by education level (Table 3), those possessing a high school degree have a greater percentage of ethnic diversity (39.1% non-white) than those with bachelor's (19.6% non-white) or post-graduate (32.2% non-white). Comparing this to gender distribution (Table 4), those identifying as female were more presented in all degree categories, except high school diploma holders. A possible factor for these breakdowns could be age - 65.2% of respondents with a high school diploma only identified themselves as 40+ years old at the time of survey participation. The number of undergraduate degrees increased as age went down.



	GED	High School	Associates	Bachelors	Post Graduate
White/Caucasian	2	13	21	256	60
Black/African American	0	4	5	12	5
Hispanic/Latino	0	1	4	20	7
Asian/Asian American	0	1	2	7	6
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0	1	3	0
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	1	0	0	0
Biracial/Multiracial	0	2	4	22	11
Prefer not to answer	0	1	0	4	1

Table 3. Education level indicated by survey respondents across ethnic identity

INTERNSHIPS

Participants were asked to indicate the amount of time served working unpaid or seasonally before being hired to a full-time position. 86.05% of respondents answered that they had served between 0-5 years, but we recognize that this length of time may be too broad. We anticipate future surveys breaking down the range to possible month stretches and separating unpaid vs. seasonal labor. Further investigation into these questions might help determine the average amount of time full-time animal care staff have donated unpaid before being hired and how effective seasonal positions are at becoming full-time career opportunities.

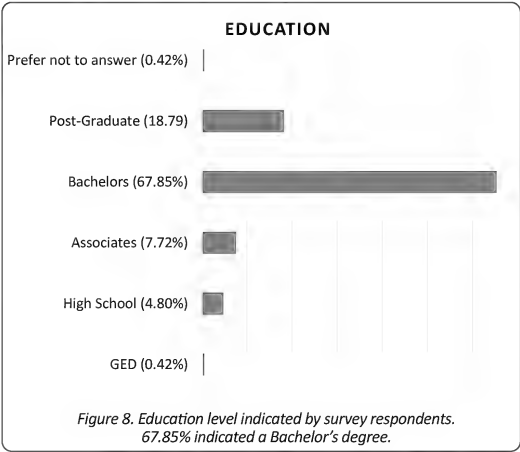


Table 4. Representation of education level across gender identity*

	GED	High School	Associates	Bachelors	Post Graduate
Male	0	12	8	54	16
Female	2	10	29	258	73
Non-binary	0	1	0	8	0
Prefer not to answer	0	0	0	1	0
Other	0	0	0	3	1

*The only category where males outnumber females is at a high school education level

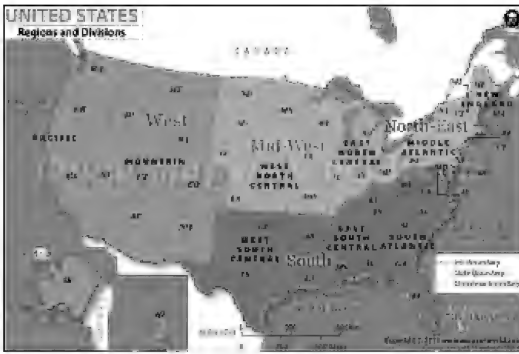
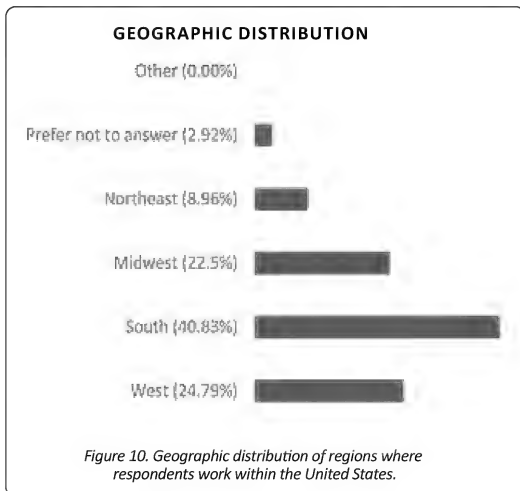


Figure 9. Map provided to survey participants to indicate their geographic location of work.



Given the barriers that unpaid labor can have to career trajectory, we would be interested to see if results from these questions impact diversity representation in animal care. Of those who indicated working in an unpaid capacity for 0-5 years, 35% of respondents were Non-White. Internships/Volunteer work are considered stepping stones in career development, and for most full-time animal keeper positions, also a requirement. However, given the cost of education and student loan repayment challenges, future generations may reconsider their willingness to work in under/unpaid positions as an entry point.

REGIONAL INFORMATION

When asked to indicate where survey participants work within a map of the United States (Figure 9), the Southern region had the most representatives (Figure 10). Reasons for this distribution of respondents may be from the given map encompassing an area with a high number of zoo and aquarium facilities, sanctuaries, and nature centers, or simply greater participation from facilities in that area. In addition to the geographic regions on the map, respondents were also from Canada, Australia, Latin America, and the United Arab Emirates.

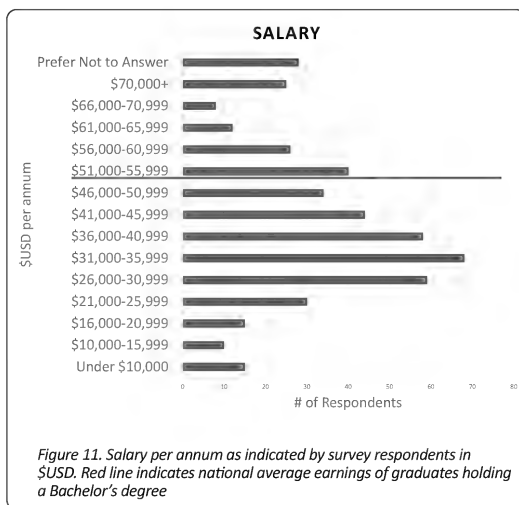
DID YOU GROW UP IN THE REGION WHERE YOU CURRENTLY LIVE AND WORK?

This question was pertinent to our demographic inquiries, given that the transient nature of the zoo and aquarium field may have individuals moving away from home for internships or job opportunities. Those that could have entry-level jobs while living with family or reliable transportation for unpaid opportunities like volunteer work may not have left the region where they grew up, given the economic advantages and personal connections.

Survey results were mixed regarding this topic, with 59.79% indicating they were raised in the area where they currently work, and 40.21% stated they were not. We did find that a slightly higher percentage of respondents identifying as non-white noted that they remained in the same region as they grew up. We found that the regions offered for identification in this first round of survey responses did not necessarily indicate location as a hindrance. However, we did not inquire about the total number of facilities one had experience working in either a paid or unpaid capacity.

SALARY RANGE

Of the 472 participants who responded to the Average Salary question, 397 were Full-Time Zoo Staff. The average salary of Full-Time Zoo staff survey participants was \$31,000-\$35,999 (Figure 11). This is below the national average salary of \$51,212, indicated by the red line in Figure 11, for those holding Bachelor's degrees in the US (ZipRecruiter). Given the above survey results, animal keepers' most common completed degree is a Bachelor's, putting their salaries below this average. Limited formal data collection has occurred regarding the



education level prerequisites of job postings in the zoo and aquarium field; however, having a Bachelor's degree is common practice, as supported by these survey results.

It is important to note that 16 respondents identified their titles as being at a senior administrative or department head level, affecting average reported salaries. Given the varying cost of living differences from facility to facility, the salary data listed may not be enough to consider the impact of finances on demographics. Some institutions offer higher per-hour wages based on locality costs of housing in major cities. Since animal keepers, on average, make lower hourly rates than many fields, it should be considered that pay may be a barrier to careers in animal care. Our results from this survey do not indicate a race discrepancy among pay bands, but earning levels can undoubtedly impact the ability of someone to remain in their position.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER DATA COLLECTION

When examining the results data, the Diversity Committee saw possible areas impacting diversity within animal care that should be expanded upon for any future surveys. We feel that the questions posed regarding the length of time volunteering or holding internships did not give the depth of insight we were hoping for, and future surveys will distinguish the amounts by months rather than years. We would also be interested to see the total number of internships people have participated in before being hired in a full-time position and if either of those questions shows a disparity along with ethnic identity.

We did not inquire whether positions currently held are permanent or temporary, nor did we ask about the benefits provided. Future surveys should account for these tiers of employment, particularly if a temporary position has been

created to backfill a staff shortage. The challenges of short-staffed teams are well-discussed in the field, but there is little data on turnover rates and the number of facilities an animal keeper worked throughout their career. Once a position has been obtained, the culture of our workforce could also be a limiting factor in attracting and retaining diverse animal care professionals. Future surveys would investigate the respondents' percentages of immediate team turnover and the average number of years held at a current position and institution.

The scope of education background may deserve expansion as well. AAZK members may also be zoo educators or those with museum science degrees rather than those in traditional environmental or natural science programs. Other animal keepers may hold degrees in an unrelated field but find their passion after graduation. Another educational factor that may impact people's consideration, time served in the field, or decisions to change careers is the prevalence of student loan repayment. Given the salary scope listed within the above results, we can see that many keepers are being paid a rate lower than the US national average for those holding Bachelor's degrees, the most common educational level of respondents. We did not inquire about how many respondents may be working additional jobs in animal care positions to supplement their income.

LIMITATIONS

The Diversity Committee recognizes limitations to the interpretation of data presented within this article. First, the survey was sent to not only AAZK membership but encouraged to be spread to any zoo or aquarium facility that might wish to participate. Interest groups like the Association of Minority Zoo & Aquarium Professionals and Zoo Registrars Association were reached out to help advertise. Their involvement may have swayed respondents from particular ethnic or educational backgrounds, which impacted results. These results may reflect a more diverse group within the zoo and aquarium industry than is currently represented.

By coming from an official committee, participants are more likely to be already familiar with AAZK as an organization. This is far from representative of many animal care professionals within North America. With an overall response rate from AAZK membership of only 18%, there were concerns among the committee that some may have hesitated to participate in the survey out of concern for their institution's opinion or reputation. We emphasize that the respondents' information could not be traced to an individual or specific facility at any stage. We hope that zoological leaders will encourage their staff to respond to future surveys.

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Note : *If you would like to see a full copy of the survey questionnaire, e-mail diversity@aazk.org*

The Price of Experience:

An examination of zoo and aquarium internships

Hilary Colton, Animal Keeper
Smithsonian's National Zoological Park
Washington, DC

Internships are one of the most common suggestions given to anyone interested in a career in captive animal care. Framed as experiential learning opportunities, they are presented as a way to apply skills in a practical rather than an academic setting. Individuals who have completed an internship are considered to have gained relevant and necessary experience for future work. Within many STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, these experiences may be laboratory or field-based. However, there is no standardized expectation of the internship experience regarding learning objectives or time served.

Widely considered an opportunity for candidates to gain footing in one's area of interest and grow practical skills for future employment, internships can also lead to a feeling of exploitation, discouraging interested parties from pursuing the field. In the case of zoos and aquariums, opportunities generally consist of working alongside paid keepers or aquarists in daily husbandry, with some facilities including additional components like fieldwork. Though zoos and aquariums preach the value of educating a diverse audience, the challenges and costs associated with the experience can have a disparate impact on the diversity of those who can participate in these opportunities.

Zoo & Aquarium Internships
Data were collected for one month by examining all internship opportunities on the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Jobs board (www.aza.org/jobs), currently considered one of the most complete posting sites in the zoo and aquarium field in North America. Although AZA is an accreditation organization, facilities that are not members are permitted to advertise job and internship openings, and their posts were not discounted in the analysis below. The postings were all for terms during the 2022 calendar year, mainly over the summer months. 168 internship opportunities were advertised from 41 different facilities (Table 1). If the facility posting did not designate a total number of hires possible, it was counted as a single opportunity.

Of the total positions offered (Figure 1), only 14% provided monetary support in either the form of wages or a stipend. However, when looking further into this funding and comparing the expected hours per week asked of interns, just 47.6% of paid opportunities offered a rate above the federal minimum wage of USD \$7.25 per hour (Figure 2). One facility noted the ability to pay interns at a rate that would fall above the minimum wage but designated it as need-based, requiring an additional application and school financial aid information to obtain. When examining

the opportunities where housing is available for the length of the internship, 90% of postings offered none, with one facility charging rent for the use of space during the experience (Figure 3). Of the 16 paid positions advertised, only one provides no-cost housing. Regarding travel costs to a facility site, only one posting mentioned that financial aid is available to cover the cost of airfare. When investigating housing options for the internships posted, 90% of the total internships had no options available for use. Of the remaining opportunities, 16 mentioned the use of no-cost housing, and one facility offered room for rent at a property owned by the institution. The postings that mentioned housing defined it as room only, with no additional funds available for food or transportation.

Table 1. Summary of positions listed for 2022 internship opportunities (www.aza.org/jobs)

Total number of internships*	168
Animal Care departments	129
Conservation of Field Projects	11
Other Zoo/Aquarium departments	28

*Postings pertaining to opportunities abroad and veterinary internships in which a D.V.M. degree or higher were required have not been included in this analysis

PAID VS UNPAID OPPORTUNITIES

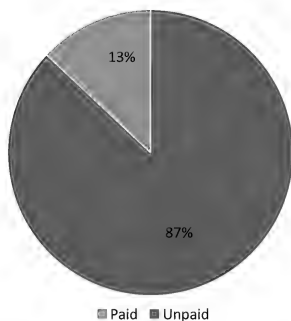


Figure 1. Percentage of paid internship availability (23) compared to unpaid (145)

\$USD PER HOUR

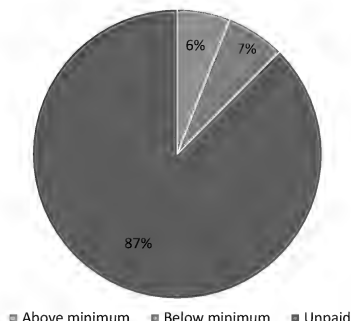


Figure 2. Calculated hourly pay for internships posted in regards to Federal Minimum Wage of \$7.25/hour

HOUSING

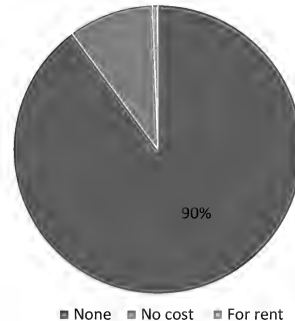


Figure 3. Internship opportunities offering short-term housing to participants at no-cost (16) or rent paid (1)

In an analysis of the expected work hours of interns, the majority of postings state an expectation of 40 per week (Figure 4). Looking specifically at paid opportunities, 64.7% of the postings referenced full-time work weeks of at least 40 hours (Figure 5). It should also be noted that in posts advertising a “range” of time expected, none asked for less than 20 hours, with the most intensive opportunities approaching 50 hours per work week.

HIDDEN COSTS

Whether or not stipends are provided, accepting an internship can have unexpected costs that individuals must consider when applying. Some internships state a willingness to work with students for class credit should they pursue it. However, if not enrolled as a full-time student during the internship period, they may not be eligible for financial aid pertaining to a formal course (Edwards & Hertel-Fernandez 2010).

Sufficient affordable housing is already an issue plaguing many major cities, with short-term options even more limited. Short-term leases are often more expensive, with upfront security deposits to account for tenant turnover. With most internships only lasting a few months, finding affordable housing that aligns with their appointment term is another barrier. These costs are acknowledged as necessities in some

postings, with multiple institutions citing the ability to afford food, housing, and transportation as essential requirements.

Only one posting mentioned financial aid available to assist in transportation costs to the facility, should the selected intern need it. Some of these experiences are in remote areas, which, when combined with the high number of expected hours of work, significantly limits individuals’

likelihood to earn outside wages during their time serving as an intern. Such facilities can have a disparate or discriminatory impact, wherein only those with financial means can gain the essential experience demanded of entry-level positions (Parsons & Scarlett 2020) and may exclude caregivers and other groups that cannot afford to work unpaid (Fournier 2015).

Some positions required applicants

HOURS PER WEEK (PAID+UNPAID)

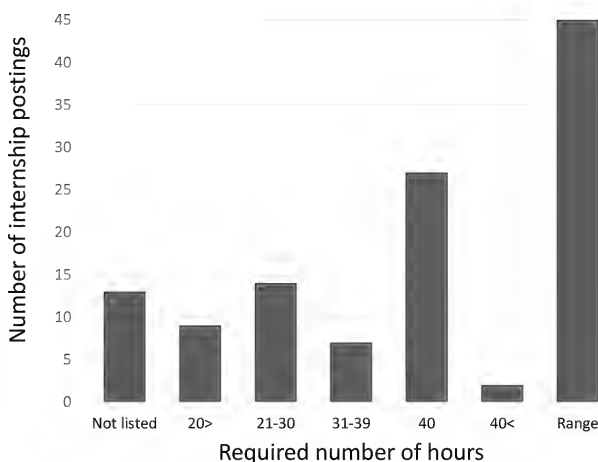


Figure 4. Hours per week expected of interns (paid + unpaid). For the category of “range,” all opportunities started at 20+ hours per week.

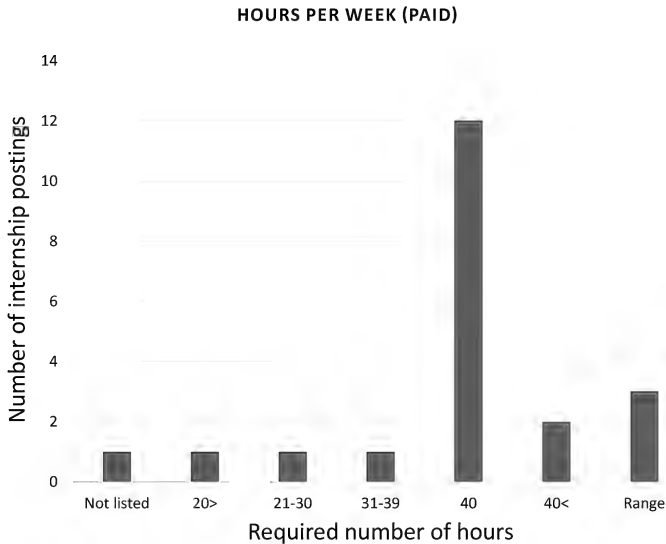


Figure 5. Hours per week required for paid internship opportunities

to have or obtain a current driver's license when examining the internships posted. This carries an implicit bias towards those with access to a vehicle. In many urban areas of the United States, some residents do not obtain a driver's license, given the prevalence of public transportation. Some facilities, usually those that contain a degree of fieldwork, state that using a private vehicle is needed to fulfill the internship responsibilities. This puts the financial burden of vehicle maintenance, insurance, and fuel on the intern. None of the posted positions mention a stipend for public transport, though one facility provides a link to interested parties to a discounted student bus pass available through the city.

Once hired for an internship experience, there may be associated costs with hiring, such as background checks or uniform attire requirements. Of the 168 internship offerings, two facilities referenced fees to cover uniform shirts for interns as part of the onboarding process. Appropriate and safe footwear may also be required of interns but can also be costly, with most online keeper forums exchanging recommendations of boots with many prices starting above

\$75 per pair. Should a facility require a specific type of dress in addition to staff shirts (i.e., khaki pants, shorts of a particular length or style), these are additional costs associated with the experience. When considering the expected number of hours of work per week and the likelihood of getting clothes dirty in the animal care field, provisions of uniforms beyond a facility t-shirt and access to laundry facilities would help offset the costs of participation.

Factors for Evaluating Internships

The United States Department of Labor has created Fact Sheet #71 (2018), widely used to evaluate internship programs under the Fair Labor Standards Act. This document describes the following seven factors to assess if an internship program operates in a way where the interns are primary beneficiaries of the experience rather than as a source of labor for the institution (Figure 6). If a review of these factors finds that the employer is the primary beneficiary of the intern's work, the intern is entitled to both wage and overtime pay.

It should be noted that workplaces in the public sector or not-for-profit organizations are considered exempt from these expectations. These exemptions are broadly applied in a

The goal of experience-based internships should always be to further the interns' education and training, not provide labor for the workplace.

field where facilities may be classified as charity conservation organizations or part of city, state, or federal governments. Of the 238 current AZA-accredited facilities, 54% are not-for-profit (Marcy 2021). As such, the seven evaluative factors are not always considered when building internship programs at zoos and aquariums. Regardless if a zoo or aquarium falls under the jurisdiction of FLSA, the goal of experience-based internships should always be to further the interns' education and training, not provide labor for the workplace.

WAYS TO IMPROVE

An evolution from apprenticeship programs that resulted in certification, the prevalence of internships in the workplace has expanded to most types of business, and there is no formal definition of what an internship consists of. Approximately three-quarters of students enrolled in American four-year universities will work as interns at least once before graduating (Burke 2013). A recent National Association of Colleges and Employers student survey has shown that students who participate in paid internships have better post-graduation hiring timelines, resulting in higher starting salaries and a shorter job search (NACE 2019). The former may be of particular impact to zoological interns, given that many job postings distinguish paid experience as a prerequisite for keeper positions.

The zoo industry's reliance on internships without monetary support

Figure 6. Fair Labor Standards Act “primary beneficiary test” to determine if an intern can be considered an employee (Fact Sheet #71)

1. The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee—and vice versa.
2. The extent to which the internship provides training that would be similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by educational institutions.
3. The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern’s formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
4. The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern’s academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
5. The extent to which the internship’s duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
6. The extent to which the intern’s work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
7. The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship.

costs the field in multiple ways. The frequency of unpaid opportunities excludes qualified applicants who cannot afford the internship costs: relocation for an offer, housing, uniforms, background checks, and more. Most paid positions do not offer enough to cover basic minimum wage and cost of living, let alone build savings. The general expectations of unpaid experience for entry keeper applicants brings a divide between those who can afford to donate their time freely and those who cannot (Curiale 2010). This ultimately impacts the diversity of the

field for those who can afford to work as animal care staff.

Zoos and aquariums often tout themselves as significant education proponents but are failing at reducing barriers and providing equitable entry points for many careers. In fields with an emphasis on conservation and education missions, the requirements to have internship experience can frustrate those interested, where facilities offer low pay in exchange for the chance to align themselves with a public service ambition (Morrissey

et al., 2020). An institution should be able to define the goals of an internship program and how the experience will be helpful for the intern.

When designing and reviewing internship applications received, programs can be more mindful of essential requirements for the work. For the expected number of hours, what lessons or skills are interns expected to learn in a 40-hour week that cannot be taught in 20? Efforts should be made to accommodate working around a job or school schedule, if only to make the experience more equitable and broaden the scope of internship candidates.

What lessons or skills are interns expected to learn in a 40-hour week that cannot be taught in 20?

Some internship applications expect that interns are current or recent undergraduate students, which can be another financial barrier. This may be in response to the idea of experiential internships being education-based rather than career apprentices where skills and certifications can be collected. When considering intern applications in relation to what will be taught during the experience, how academic enrollment indicates the ability of the intern to learn should be questioned. Particularly for internships stating a minimum grade point average (GPA)

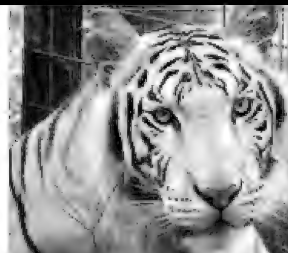
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and letters of academic reference, there may not be any correlation between how those factors make an individual more qualified for the role and duties they would be performing. Regular assessment is necessary to consider learning objectives, and by the end of a program, a facility should be able to determine if knowledge has successfully been imparted.

When evaluating applications, reviewers should always be mindful of their own bias, conscious or unconscious. Many current zoo professionals, especially those working as animal keepers, have participated in their own internship periods before being hired, which may influence their expectations for future interns. Some facilities may have a single internship coordinator per team working in a keeper capacity, some may be in a supervisory Lead Keeper role, and others may be using their education departments to vet the initial applicants. In any case, those receiving applications should be aware of how their own experiences and backgrounds may impact how applicants are scored. The method of interviews should also be evaluated to ensure equal opportunity for interns and the communities served. Though they may be working in-person at a facility, interviews can be conducted via phone, online or in-person. Facilities could create interview panels to allow for multiple perspectives on who might best be served by the learning opportunity, and provide a chance for others to sit on the hiring side of the table.

By increasing efforts to seek interns from within a local community, those participants of internship programs may gain the experience at a lessened cost to the individual. Housing expenses might be lower, and transportation may be arranged through family and friends. Rethinking how opportunities are advertised is a good first step in acquiring a more diverse applicant pool. Local schools and community groups might never know an opportunity is available if only visible on the facility web page and an industry listserv.

Casting a wider net could also serve to make inroads in underrepresented communities and develop long-term relationships between groups like public school systems and service organizations.

Regardless of where the interns are coming from and the length of their commitment, we should routinely examine the learning objectives and skills taught. Program goals and intern roles may differ between animal departments, but involved parties should have clear expectations. If working for course credit, the facility should know what the school considers essential components of the learning experience and ensure they are met. At the end of an internship, interns should be able to articulate lessons learned and how the experience will be helpful in career development.

These educational experiences are also an opportunity for the growth of the host institution. After their terms are complete, exit interviews of interns can help provide valuable feedback to both the host unit and the facility. If interns are leaving unsatisfied, departments need to know and make efforts to address the situation. If necessary, exit interviews might be conducted outside the chain of command to encourage more open and honest dialogue with interns about their time. Mentorship training may be a valuable opportunity to ensure consistency in program expectations and what roles interns are asked to fulfill. Professional development for an intern might include resume writing reviews, mock interviews, or shadow days at other animal units to increase taxa exposure. Introducing them to resources outside the institution, from listservs to organizations like AAZK can provide further opportunities for growth. It should be remembered that interns are being given their first “inside look” at the culture of animal care. A conscious effort should be made to ensure these environments are as welcoming and beneficial as possible for all

stakeholders, including the community, regardless of background.

The expectation that applicants for keeper positions have internship experience at a zoo or aquarium prior to acquiring a paid position also puts our volunteer forces at a disadvantage when considering the amount of labor they donate to a facility. Though not all volunteers are looking to get into the field as a career, some may be interested but are unable to dedicate beyond a maximum number of hours. Networking opportunities benefit someone serving as an intern - having an individual on-site more than one day a week allows them to meet more industry professionals and learn through experiences like veterinary exams or collection inventories. Volunteer programs should be required to hold their own assessments of barriers that may be impacting interested parties from gaining access. More significant effort could be made to introduce anyone pursuing zoo careers to people working in various roles and career paths at a facility to provide the opportunity for cross-department mentorship. Such guidance could also be offered to any interested party to help facilitate their professional development, including seasonal employees outside of animal care.

Animal keepers are often the individuals designing internships or hiring and supervising interns and volunteers at our facilities. There is the opportunity to educate ourselves on making internships more equitable and providing mentorship opportunities for personal growth. The role of a mentor should be considered separate from the responsibilities of an animal keeper, in that the position is intended to promote the professional development of a potential peer. Both of these positions can be valuable learning experiences. Intentional efforts are needed to make existing internship programs better. Are we up to the challenge?

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Institutionalizing Religious Diversity: A transnational comparison of zoological facilities

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With recent and ongoing social movements across the country, diversity is becoming an increasingly prioritized issue at the forefront of American industry, and the zoological field is no exception. While there has been a propensity toward emphasizing demographic diversity in ethnicity, gender, age, etc. (Hennekam, 2018), religion is an additional facet of diversity that must be considered as it relates to the workplace. This paper will discuss the importance of religious diversity and provide a comparison in international protections and practices in the workplace with a focus on zoological institutions. While religion is a dimension of diversity, it also comprises a multitude of components within itself (Ammerman, 2010), including belief, belonging, practice, and experience (Singh & Babbar, 2021). In a work environment, this set of beliefs, personal values and principles form a framework from which an employee's motivation and behavior can be better understood (King, 2008). Religion is often a core part of one's values and accordingly

influences decisions, interpersonal interactions, and even career paths. It can play a significant role for employees throughout their entire time with an organization, including hiring, promotion, and termination (Bader, Alidadi, & Vermeulen, 2013). As America is a religiously diverse nation, staffing practices within the zoological industry should take necessary steps to reflect this reality.

Diversity is key to forming an inclusive work environment as it has proven to be within an organization's best interest to promote a variety of people within its staffing (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013). A lack of diversity, including religious diversity, can undermine progress and innovation that has proven to come from the inclusion of various perspectives (Richard & Miller, 2013). Thus, religious diversity can be leveraged to benefit individual facilities and the animal care industry as a whole.

According to the Pew Research Center, approximately 77 percent of Americans

claim religion is important to them (2014). In a 2014 Pew survey of more than 35,000 people, Christians comprised 70 percent of the US population, and nearly 23 percent of Americans claimed to not align with a religious framework. The remaining seven percent affiliated with other non-Christian faiths, with the most prominent being Judaism (2 percent), and Unitarian and Muslim both at 1 percent. In the United States, the right to religious practice is constitutionally protected under the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Furthermore, Title VII of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on religion. Employment discrimination may occur during hiring or through disparate treatment, job segregation, or harassment based on one's religious belief or practice. Additionally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandates that an employer must reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee or prospective employee — unless the employer can demonstrate accommodation would



result in undue hardship on business operations or conduct (Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, or 42 U.S.C. sec. 2000e). In accordance with the above mandates, all employees, regardless of working for nonprofit, for-profit, or public sector facilities are covered under this anti-discrimination and anti-retaliation legislation. Multiple states have additional laws regarding religious discrimination and exemptions thereof to consider (Gelb, 2012). Accommodating religious practice in the workplace often takes the form of dress code permissions, times for prayer, and recognition of prominent religious days both weekly and annual (Hennekam, 2018). Human Resource departments must familiarize themselves with these legal protections for employees. However, it can still prove difficult for a company to navigate how to best serve those who require workplace religious accommodation while maintaining equality for all employees.

Accommodation for employees can be most evident in providing days

off for regular religious practice or as a traditional day of rest, such as Fridays in Islam, Saturdays in Judaism, and Sundays for most Christian denominations. As traditional weekend days, these days are also the most requested off in general by employees, including those who may be asking for religious purposes. As many facilities normally grant personnel these prized weekend days and holidays based on seniority or on a rotational basis, the challenge of accommodating those who want a day off for a religious reason lies in the perceived fairness for those who may want it off for other personal reasons like family gatherings. When accommodation may require additional company resources, feelings of inequality may be fostered amongst colleagues (Gebert et al., 2014) especially if a staff member's day off may lead to heavier workloads for other team members. Given the inherent necessity of staff at zoological facilities, the potential burden of scheduling difficulties may be felt more severely than in other fields. It is for this reason

that facility managers must take proactive measures to accommodate staff and promote lateral inclusion among employees.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), located in the Middle East near Oman and Saudi Arabia, boasts a high percentage of non-citizens with 89 percent of the total population possessing a foreign passport (Report on International Religious Freedom, 2018). Approximately 77 percent of the UAE population identify as Muslim, and Islam is the official religion (Report on International Religious Freedom, 2018). As a legally Muslim nation, the UAE federal calendar does not recognize other religious days such as Easter and Christmas – although these days are publicly acknowledged and celebrations common – and governmental holidays follow the Islamic calendar.

At zoological facilities within the UAE, efforts are made to accommodate staff with various religious belief systems. According to their individual practice,

Muslim colleagues are offered prayer breaks throughout the day, usually around ten minutes long. While legally employers are only obligated to offer breaks every five hours to employees regardless of reason, many employers still accommodate Muslim staff in this regard. In recognition of the well-being of employees, prayer breaks are built into the work schedule. To support the spiritual needs of staff on an operational level, staff members that are assigned to a specific area during the time of prayer are provided relief by a colleague on a rotational basis. An example would be if a staff member were assigned to an animal interactive space, another colleague would temporarily cover their position for the duration. By preemptively accounting for staff needing breaks, the daily operations of the facility remain unchanged in the process. Prayer breaks can be requested by any staff member at the facility, including those in guest services, education, or in other roles that may always require an employee to be present at a designated location such as animal contact areas. In accounting for and accommodating prayer breaks in the United States, these breaks can be likened to other regularly occurring structured breaks rather than workday interruptions. By providing short prayer breaks, employers can allow an employee to practice their religion while benefiting from the support of their facility's management and company culture.

While Islam is the leading and state-sponsored religion in the region, the UAE government recognized the need for broader religious accommodation. When the Pope visited Abu Dhabi in 2019, a legal mandate was put forth stating that any staff affiliated with the Catholic Church were permitted to have off of work if they wished to attend the Papal Mass. Accommodating religious staff can take the form of breaks for prayer and recognition of significant days for a faith tradition but can also mean recognizing other religious practices like dress. Variation in work

uniforms to allow for hijabs, abayas, or afro head coverings can support staff whose religions require head coverings. Additionally, recognition of fasting during particular days can better support and accommodate employees. During the holy month of Ramadan, many Muslims refrain from consuming food or drink from sunup to sundown. For most businesses in the UAE, including zoological facilities, working hours are shortened to accommodate observance. This can mean staff work an abbreviated shift and leave two hours early, or staff come in at layered times. Employers can utilize these opportunities to recognize that some religious practices may impact an employee's work and offering more flexible working hours can benefit staff and the work produced. Supporting employees to practice their individual religious beliefs promotes respect, empathy, and mutual understanding amongst management and other employees (Hennekam, 2018).

As the religious demographic background of the US demonstrates, the communities zoo and aquaria facilities support are diverse. Allowing for a visible representation of a minority religion may help someone ask questions and learn when otherwise they might not have engaged. Guests may feel more comfortable interacting with employees if they see they are of the same religious background or community. Children can also find their career aspirations validated by seeing relatable individuals in public roles. More people are able to consider the zoological field and engage with it when individuals are respected in a holistic manner and employees do not experience barriers to public-facing opportunities. Policies from management and HR that support diversity – such as prayer breaks and accommodating religious apparel – let employees know an organization values their full self (Cintas et al., 2013). Having the capacity to practice one's religion is important for the overall well-being of the employee and can improve work

life (Gelb, 2012). Facilities can ensure holistic support of employees through the flexibility of uniform apparel to accommodate religious garments. While visible apparel may not always be apparent in religious practice, it can be a determining factor of employment for some if they are able to accept a uniformed position.

COVID-19 has taught flexibility in the work environment and has allowed many facilities to adapt to public and health needs including alternative staff scheduling. Facilities can also adapt to accommodate a broader range of staff. The zoological field collectively limits who may be deemed colleagues and professional peers when uniforms and faith-based needs in practice and schedules are permitted to remain as obstacles preventing other qualified individuals from entering this field of work. Fostering a framework of inclusivity is essential for supporting a diverse industry, including the religiously diverse. Facilities can be proactive in inclusivity by having structures in place to accommodate if there is a need. This can take the form of permitting dress as a form of religious expression but can be broader reaching than uniform flexibility. Colleagues should be cognizant of the support of HR and management if a visitor says something insensitive. Support in this regard must be fully in practice and not simply as a written sentiment of support for diversity. Recognition and respect for an employee's religious needs can benefit employee morale, performance, and tenure with the company (Cintas et al., 2013).

Everyone should know their rights as employees but must not punish or stigmatize others for implementing theirs. A request for workplace religious accommodation should not be discouraged by management, HR, or by colleagues. While such requests may require creativity with scheduling, they should not be negatively viewed as a reflection of the staff's work performance or

commitment to the role. Too often, breaks can be negatively perceived while also steeped in double standards. This is dangerous for company culture as it can lead to burnout, personnel conflict, and lowered morale (Leiter, & Maslach, 2014). Correspondingly, breaks requested to care for personal spiritual needs like prayer can be unfairly viewed by colleagues and management, stemming from perceived inequality. Support for religious peers must be done so at an institutional and cultural level. Institutionalizing religious accommodation normalizes the effort and can promote colleague camaraderie and inclusion.

In addition to prayer breaks, other possible ways religion might be stigmatized can include asking for lighter work days during fasting holidays and asking for specific days of the week off to allow for service attendance. This can cause scheduling conflicts between facilities needs and desired days off around traditionally religious weekend days and holidays. By extension, management, HR, supervisors, and colleagues can take this as an opportunity to navigate conflicting needs without vilifying the staff requesting the scheduling adjustment. It should not be expected or assumed all staff will want to take the same days off or have the same holidays off like Christmas and Easter. Accommodation of prayer breaks, days off, and religious holidays may encumber others in the workforce and be viewed as preferential treatment or capitulating to the legality of a request. Conversely, the formation of barriers that prevent employee observance can have negative externalities related to industry success.

Rights to religious practice may not be openly encouraged or advertised at your facility. Even if employees have a legal basis for protecting their religious practices, they must take the initiative in asserting what they require from their employers, whether for uniform accommodation, prayer breaks, days off to attend service, or other spiritual

needs. Additionally, note that a facility may not legally inquire about religious beliefs in the interview or hiring process in addition to many other dimensions of diversity.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Does your staff and work culture support and accommodate for diversity? Is your uniform policy flexible enough to accommodate diverse religious apparel? Would management/HR support a religious minority employee if a visitor said something insensitive? How could your facility make an effort to be more inclusive through company structure and culture?

If you feel that you have been discriminated against by an employer based on your religious views or practice there are resources available. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is a federal body that helps to protect workers' rights and enforce non-discrimination laws and anti-retaliation mandates. The EEOC can provide legal counsel and guidance in the event of workplace discrimination and can be contacted on their website at <https://www.eeoc.gov>. If you are employed in Canada and believe you have experienced religious discrimination in your workplace, resources are also available from the Canadian Human Rights Commission at <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca>. For more information, please contact the AAZK Diversity Committee at Diversity@aazk.org. No employee should have to choose between their faith and their career in the zoological field.

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The Importance of Queer Representation in Zoos and Aquariums

*John Scott, Wild Animal Keeper
WCS New York Aquarium
Brooklyn, New York*

After fifteen years of working in zoos and aquariums across the country, I have heard the following phrase countless times: “I work with animals because I don’t want to work with people”. This sentiment is uttered with an astonishing frequency, almost as frequent as architects placing exhibit drains at the highest point of our exhibits. What this sentiment betrays however is that our work with animals relies on inspiring guests and other people to care more about the wildlife at zoos and aquariums; for the conservation movement is just that: a movement which requires people to see themselves in the conservation work that we do at zoological facilities. In order to inspire the greatest amount of guests that visit zoos and aquariums, we must be mirroring the diversity that exists in our communities so that all guests who come to our facilities can see themselves in our work.

Growing up as a child, I was fascinated by the work being done at my local zoo and couldn’t wait to be a part of this field which was striving to protect

wildlife and their habitats across the globe. I was certain that I wanted to dedicate my life to conservation and worked diligently up the ladder from zoo camp counselor to my current job today. What I was less certain about was my own sexuality, which was something



John Scott. Photo by Jenn Rant/WCS.

that I grappled with for years, often times in silence. While I had incredibly supportive coworkers and mentors in

the field, I had incredibly few examples of out gay men to whom I could turn to discuss issues like how to manage being a part of the LGBTQ+ community and also excel in the zoological field. By the time I was secure in my own gay identity and came out publicly in 2013, I was well into my dream job of working with animals and fearful of how my personal life might impact my career. This was seven years before the United States Supreme Court decision *Bostock v. Clayton County* which determined that employers could not fire employees for identifying as a part of the LGBTQ+ community, and therefore meant that my coming out could have jeopardized my burgeoning career (Totenberg, 2020). Thankfully my employer then did not bat an eyelash at my news, however I often wonder if having out gay role models in the field from a young age could have assuaged my fears of coming out in an industry that historically wasn’t the most representative.

It is an interesting feeling being on the other side of the coin now as a thirty-something gay man in this field,

and realizing that coming out as gay was really only the starting point for the work that needed to be done in addressing the role of queer people in the zoological field. Perhaps the most important way having LGBTQ+ representation in zoos and aquariums impacts the world is by challenging heteronormativity. Heteronormativity can be defined as “the power relations, knowledge and institutions that sustain normative constructions of heterosexuality as ‘natural’ and privileged” (Yonder and Mattheis, 2016). This idea that heterosexuality is the only natural state and normative standard for the world has permeated everything from politics to the professional realm. As open and out queer people in the zoological industry, we immediately challenge the heteronormative framework within our industry and society as a whole.

In order to understand why LGBTQ+ visibility and representation matters in zoos and aquariums, one must first grasp why diversity is essential for these organizations in the modern era. Diversity in environmental organizations, including zoological institutions, is critical because it helps when making informed decisions regarding the work that a particular institution undertakes (Johnson, 2019). The broader the background of the staff at an institution, the better they are able to handle the challenges that all organizations inevitably face, such as those related to programming, fundraising and education. In addition,

diverse staff reaches out to members of the public historically underserved (Johnson, 2019). Zoos and aquariums are trying to connect as many people to wildlife as possible, and therefore need to have their conservation messages reach the widest audience possible. LGBTQ+ staff members are better equipped to reach out to queer members of the communities in which zoos and aquariums are located, and therefore are better able to communicate those needs back to their respective organizations. Queer people are better able to connect with other queer members of the larger community, and better able to translate the messages that zoos and aquariums are trying to spread, to audiences who are LGBTQ+. A diverse staff allows for zoos and aquariums to form strategic partnerships outside of their organizations, and to LGBTQ+ individuals, who potentially can contribute to these organizations’ fundraising and development (Johnson, 2019). Therefore, having a diverse staff at a zoological facility is extremely beneficial for these organizations’ conservation messaging and connecting to the widest audience as possible.

Sometimes I wish I could show 1990s John how far the world has come over the last thirty years in terms of queer issues. And while I think that we have come a long way as an industry and as a society in terms of LGBTQ+ representation, inclusion and advocacy, I think there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done. While I am incredibly proud of institutions for flying

the Pride flag each June, I think we can do better in terms of queer issues for the other eleven months of the year. One helpful step is the creation of employee resource groups, like the one we have in the Wildlife Conservation Society, which strive for greater queer inclusions on all levels of the organization. Zoos and aquariums are doing better in terms of representation, but it would be great to see them actively discussing non-heteronormative behavior in their animals as a way to negate the criticism of the queer community. And much like the work of conservation is never truly over, we too must continue the work of LGBTQ+ inclusion in our field in order to make the zoological industry as representative as possible. Only when all people see themselves in the conservation work done by zoos and aquarium will wildlife truly benefit.

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**NOMINATION
DEADLINE
MAY 1, 2022**

2022 AAZK AWARDS NOMINATIONS OPENED

The American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) Awards Committee is accepting nominations for the following awards:

- THE AAZK LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
- THE AAZK MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
- THE AAZK LUTZ RUHE PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD
- THE AAZK JEAN M. HROMADKA EXCELLENCE IN ANIMAL CARE AWARD
- THE AAZK EXCELLENCE IN ANIMAL NUTRITION AWARD
- THE AAZK EXCELLENCE IN EXHIBIT RENOVATION AWARD
- THE AAZK JANET MCCOY EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION AWARD
- THE AAZK NICO VAN STRIEN LEADERSHIP IN CONSERVATION AWARD
- THE LEE HOUTS ADVANCEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT AWARD

Awards will be presented at the 2022 AAZK Conference in Toronto, Canada. The deadline for nominations is **May 1, 2022**. Information concerning the qualifications, nomination procedure, selection procedure and an explanation of the awards may be obtained at www.aazk.org, under committees & programs/awards committee.

The AAZK Excellence in Animal Nutrition Award

The American Association of Zoo Keepers Excellence in Animal Nutrition Award is presented by the AAZK Awards Committee. Established in 2005, this award is meant to recognize zoo/aquarium professionals who have been involved in projects, studies, and/or research focused on zoo/aquarium nutrition.



QUALIFICATIONS

- The nominee(s) shall be a member of AAZK, in good standing, at any membership level and a keeper/aquarist/nutritionist/etc. in any North American zoological institution or aquarium
- Nominee must have been actively involved in projects, studies, and/or research concerning zoo/aquarium nutrition.
- The nominee shall be nominated by an individual at that same institution or organization.

The AAZK Excellence in Animal Nutrition Award is awarded to a person(s) who has identified a specialized nutritional challenge or concern or a medical issue with a nutritional component that involves one or more of the following:

- Complete diet revision;
- Specialized diet for medical recovery;
- Supplemental nutritional additives for medical recovery or breeding;
- Specialized nutritional requirements or wasting (adapting to captive diet) in quarantine circumstances;
- Unique species neonatal feeding/assistance.

The nominee(s) shall be able to qualify the dietary revision with statistical data that substantiates the successful outcome:

- Monitoring of dietary intake
- Monitoring of fecal output
- Statistical monitoring of weight gain/loss
- Veterinary oversight
- Dissemination of research within AAZK or other sources

WHO WAS THE RECIPIENT IN 2020?

Erica Royer

"Receiving the Excellence in Animal Nutrition Award was quite a nice surprise! Working with the Red Siskin has been an exciting challenge since so little is known about their wild diets. It was great to be able to collaborate with so many partners (private aviculture, AZA, and EAZA) in order to come up with a husbandry and hand-rearing diet protocol for this species that is still so new to AZA facilities. I was very honored to have received this award from my peers but I hope they know that they were a part of this successful project as well!"



Final Call for Paper & Poster Abstracts
47th Annual AAZK National Conference
October 13-17, 2022
Toronto, Ontario

Abstract Submission Deadline: May 1, 2022 (11:59pm EST)

Authors will be notified regarding acceptance no later than June 1, 2022.

How to Submit Your Abstract for Consideration:

- **Submitting a Paper?** Follow this link to the Google Form <https://bit.ly/3sNlyE0>
- **Submitting a Poster?** Follow this link to the Google Form <https://bit.ly/3JARq5S>

You may also e-mail PDC@aazk.org for a direct link to the Google Form, or visit the conference website for more information at <https://www.aazk2022.org/>. If you do not use the Google Form application, your abstract will not be reviewed.

AAZK members or non-members submitting abstracts in consideration for presentation at the 2022 AAZK National Conference in Toronto may submit abstracts in their preferred language, but shall also include an English translation to assist in the scoring process. Questions should be directed to pdc@aazk.org with ATTN: Paper OR Poster as part of the e-mail subject.

PAPERS

Authors will be allowed 15 minutes for a presentation with five minutes of Q & A immediately following. If accepted, you may be scheduled to present your paper in the main ballroom, or you may be scheduled to present your paper during a concurrent, themed paper session which may have a more intimate setting.

POSTERS

Posters will be on display throughout the Conference with a dedicated Author Session scheduled for the evening of October 15. Prior to the Author Session, posters will be judged on criteria such as adherence to the conference theme, innovation, and poster layout and organization. Certificates will be awarded to the top three highest scoring posters during the Conference Awards Ceremony immediately following the Poster Author Session.



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